

WASHINGTON – U.S. Congressman Allen Boyd (D-North Florida) today received from United States Northern Command information detailing the military reconnaissance assets that could be deployed to survey the reach and extent of oil damage caused by a hurricane or storm propelling oil in the Gulf of Mexico inland. U.S. Northern Command also highlighted the appropriate procedure necessary to activate the identified military reconnaissance assets.

At Boyd's Joint Oil Spill-Hurricane Planning Conference held last month in Panama City, Congressman Boyd asked U.S. Northern Command to determine the reconnaissance assets the Department of Defense could make available in the event a hurricane were to strike the Gulf with BP's oil still present in its waters.

"In the immediate aftermath of a hurricane or storm, quickly and efficiently identifying where oil has landed and where its contamination has reached will be critical to effectively mobilizing our response efforts," said Congressman Boyd. "Our local emergency responders are among the best in the world, and the action items identified at the conference are designed to build upon the plans they currently have in place. I commend Northern Command for moving quickly to assemble these procedural guidelines and identify the military assets that could help aid our local responders. Their efforts will help us formulate the strongest hurricane-oil response plan possible so that we can best protect our people and communities from this unique threat."

U.S. Northern Command informed Congressman Boyd that it could readily deploy a number of military reconnaissance capabilities to help identify where oil has been cast by a storm, including but not limited to:

- **Specialized search aircraft** capable of aerial reconnaissance that could help survey and identify land-based oil contamination. In this particular scenario, a US Navy P-3 would likely be employed;
- **Mobile communications and data link systems** that would allow tactical units deployed on the ground integrated and unimpeded communications capabilities with aerial units surveying contamination zones. These systems will ensure that ground response units can maintain constant contact with surveying units in the air and be readily deployed to areas of greatest concern .

In addition, U.S. Northern Command could also facilitate requests for the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), a federally chartered, nonprofit corporation that is utilized as a civilian volunteer auxiliary of the

Air Force.

U.S. Northern Command also provided guidance to Congressman Boyd on the proper method for initiating these reconnaissance capabilities. Employing military capabilities in response to a disaster or emergency requires a Primary Agency Request for Assistance. In the case of a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, this request is typically made by FEMA in response to a State's request.

Congressman Boyd conducted the Joint Oil Spill-Hurricane Planning Conference to make sure our region is prepared to deal with the effects a hurricane or tropical storm would have in the event oil merged with a storm. The conference brought together representatives from federal and state emergency response agencies, military leaders, and key local stakeholders to discuss the effects a hurricane would have on the oil currently in the Gulf of Mexico and the impact it would have on our region.

Participants agreed that if a storm was to strike the Gulf now, its impact on North Florida could be disastrous: booms would be compromised; vessels of opportunity would have to be moved; oil under the water's surface could be brought up; ongoing clean-up efforts would be forced to cease; and oil could be carried inland for miles, contaminating roads, homes, schools and businesses.

Working together, participants identified several planning and action items that need to be taken to better prepare for the effects a storm would have on the oil in the Gulf, such as formulating a way to evaluate the oil's contamination of the state's water and food supply, and ensuring the prompt and adequate distribution of public information so the public knows the availability of basic government services.

Upon delivery of all the action items identified at the Joint Oil Spill-Hurricane Planning Conference, Congressman Boyd plans to deliver them to the President and urge him to use them to formulate a comprehensive federal hurricane response plan.

Participants included experts in the field of contingency planning, environmental issues, food safety, tourism, emergency response and command & control, including but not limited to representatives from U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Coast Guard, FEMA, Florida National Guard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association and other federal agencies, as well as state agencies such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Department of Agriculture, and the Florida Division of Emergency Management. Local stakeholders also participated, including county Emergency Operations Center Directors, county tourism bureaus, and local elected officials. The conference also included representatives from BP.

###

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 15, 2010

CONTACT:

Christopher Cashman, 202-225-5235